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Lane Voices Enthusiasm To Change 'Status Quo' At Holiday's Mid-Year Conference

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vision. As the head of Pepsi Co.'s restaurant division in Asia, he oversaw the only sales region in the world where KFC has been able to overtake McDonald's. During his tenure, he noted, sales went from $900 million to $2.5 billion and profits grew four-fold.

He noted that he inherited older, established restaurants in that region, but was able to turn them into highly productive sales units. Much of the thought behind that accomplishment, Lane asserted, is transferable to Holiday Inn. "I start from the premise that the object of leadership is to produce more leaders," he said.

And despite Pepsi's reputation for having rocky relations with its restaurant franchisees, Lane stated that one of his key goals is to "enhance and expand the channels of communication" between Holiday's corporate headquarters and its hotel owners and managers. "Communication is key; you do the talking, our job is to listen," he told the crowd.

Still, he indicated that his prior success with KFC in Asia was attributable to a willingness to "change the way people thought about their jobs." Lane said his mission at Holiday is to be market-driven and customer-focused. He all but mandated changes to the Holiday status quo when he asserted that "management's job is to see a company as it can be, not as it is."

In an interview following the general session, Lane stressed that his speech was not intended to define policy, but simply to present "planks and principles." He stated that the KFC phenomenon in Asia is not necessarily indicative of his plans for Holiday, although he is placing emphasis on the international potential of the hotel brand.

"There are immense opportunities open to the brand outside the U.S.," he said. "The challenge is the brand and what you put behind it from a marketing standpoint."

Other general session highlights included an extended video presentation starring Executive VP/Franchising Craig Hunt driving cross-country in his Land Rover as various Holiday division managers popped up in windshield and rear view mirrors to discuss various advances, including food & beverage Convenience Courts (see story, p. 9) for some of the brands and a new online communication system.

(The biggest response from the crowd came when Hunt was shown using his four-wheel vehicle to pull down a Holiday Inn sign. The warning: Comply with the core modernization requirements.)

Crowne Plaza A Priority

Holiday is indeed updating its quality evaluation methods, switching over to something it calls a Combined Quality Index, a mixture of guest feedback and property evaluation scores, with a minimum passing score of 700.

John Sweetwood, vp/marketing, stressed that marketing the Crowne Plaza brand will continue to be a priority. During the second half of this year, Holiday will offer triple frequent-flier miles to guests who join the Crowne Plaza Preferred program.

The goal of the Holiday Inn Priority Club frequency program, meanwhile, is to add one point of incremental occupancy for 1996, half from increased club activity and half through special promotions, Sweetwood said.

Bryan Langton, who will be retiring as Holiday Inn Worldwide chairman at the end of this year, used part of his general session speech to bid farewell. "We have revitalized this brand together," he told franchisees. "The brand is positioned for an even rosier future with Tim at the helm....I'm richer for having known you all."

Loews, Random House Promote Literacy Partners

NEW YORK— Loews Hotels and Random House joined forces on a nationwide promotion to raise money for and awareness of Literacy Partners.

The program, planned to coincide with the release of the first-ever unabridged version of the Mark Twain classic "Huckleberry Finn," placed a copy of the book in each guestroom during the month of April. If guests decided to take the book, the $25 charge was donated to Literacy Partners.

"In keeping with our Good Neighbor Policy that addresses a range of social concerns, we have identified illiteracy as one of the important issues to support," said Jonathan Tisch, president and CEO of Loews Hotels. "Through this partnership with Random House, we hope to be able to draw attention to the vital work of Literacy Partners accomplishes, while also raising money to further support their efforts."

The promotion kicked off with a fund-raising dinner at The Library in The Regency Hotel on April 2. The evening was highlighted by readings from "Huckleberry Finn" by celebrity guests such as columnist Liz Smith.

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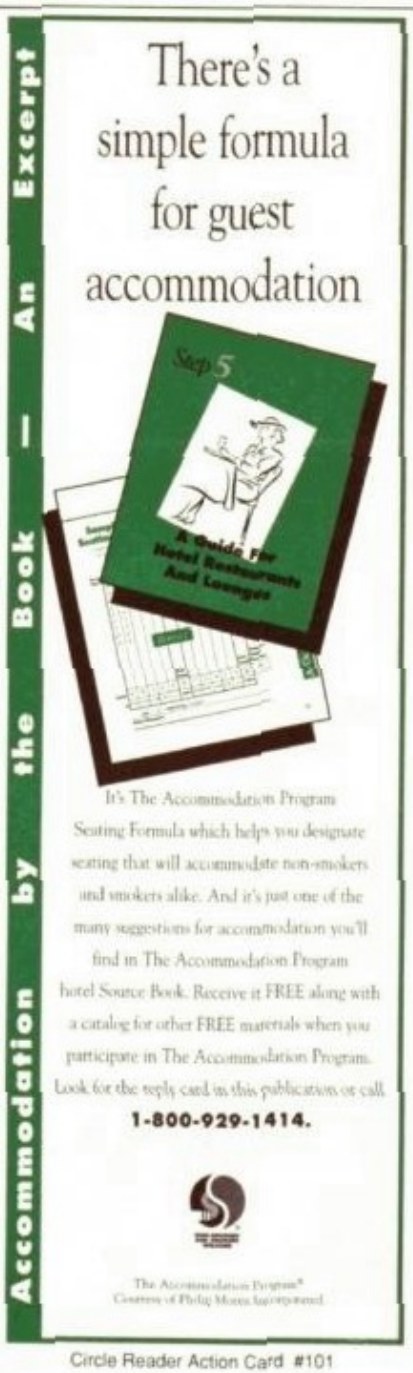
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